

STATE OF NEW YORK
DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
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NEW YORK STATE LAUNCHES FAIR HOUSING CAMPAIGN AND HOSTS PANEL DISCUSSION IN BUFFALO

New York State announced the launch of an Upstate fair housing public information campaign during a program titled, "***Laying a Foundation for a Better Tomorrow.***" The advertising campaign, which depicts different scenarios of unlawful housing discrimination, will educate New Yorkers about their housing rights and responsibilities under the Human Rights Law.

"This campaign is a testament of Governor Cuomo's ongoing commitment to protect the civil rights of all New Yorkers" said New York State Deputy Secretary for Civil Rights Alphonso B. David. "The Empire State has always been at the forefront of the fight for equality. Although we have made tremendous progress, housing discrimination still exists, and this administration will continue to work tirelessly to ensure everyone is given equal access to a safe home. "

The program, held in conjunction with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD"), included two panels held simultaneously. Panel I focused on federal and state legislation to protect women and families, the many faces of discrimination, as well as policies that perpetuate segregation. Panel II was a workshop which addressed accessibility design and construction. That session provided architects the opportunity to earn two free continuing education credits, and discuss the law and enforcement of the federal fair housing act. Panelists included Caroline Downey, General Counsel of the New York State Division of Human Rights; Margaret Hartman, President of the New York Association of Realtors; Andrea Mujahid-Moore, Equal Opportunity Specialist at HUD; and Dominic Marinelli, Vice President of the United Spinal Association.

"While forty-five years have passed since the Fair Housing Act became law, unlawful discrimination in housing continues to keep many individuals and families from obtaining the housing of their choice," said Jay Golden, HUD Fair Housing Regional Director for New York and New Jersey. "It is for that reason that it is vital that we maintain a close working relationship with our partners in this effort, such as the New York State Division of Human Rights, in combatting housing discrimination, by arming the public with knowledge of their fair housing rights."

Despite the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, many with disabilities still cannot fully enjoy their homes because they are unaware of their rights or because developers choose to ignore construction guidelines and regulations.

Paul Tobin, President and CEO of the United Spinal Association said, “For over 20 years, our organization has been dedicated to providing education and awareness about the design and construction requirements of the Fair Housing Act. Our goal with this program is to continue to promote compliance with these design requirements to help ensure that the multi-family housing environments are more accessible to our members, and all people with disabilities.”

The city of Buffalo was selected as the upstate target for the campaign because of its long history of residential racial segregation. According to 2010 U.S. Census data, Buffalo is the sixth most segregated city in the nation. The city's population is 50.4% White (45.8% non-Hispanic White alone), 38.6% Black or African American, 0.8% American Indian and Alaska Native, 3.2% Asian, 3.9% from some other race and 3.1% from two or more races. 10.5% of the total population is Hispanic or Latino of any race.

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New York has the proud distinction of being the first state in the nation to enact a Human Rights Law, which affords every citizen “an equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life.” The New York State Division of Human Rights was created to enforce this important law and does so through, among other things, the vigorous prosecution of unlawful discriminatory practices and the receipt, investigation, and resolution of complaints of discrimination. Please visit the Division’s website at www.dhr.ny.gov for additional information about the agency and its work.